



Fund

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*DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE GCARD:
Guidance Note from the Fund Council
Governance Committee*

Submitted by:
Fund Council Governance Committee

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Fund Council Governance Committee, April, 2014

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The Fund Council Governance Committee (FCGC) believes that Fund Council (FC) should focus on the role GCARD plays in CGIAR's research cycle. This note outlines the FCGC's views on the following five issues:

- A. The role of GCARD
- B. Special design considerations
- C. Geographical scope of GCARD
- D. Budget constraints
- E. Next steps in preparations for FC11

(A) In the view of the FCGC, GCARD has three important functions for CGIAR, all of which can broadly be described as accountability:

1. Demand: In terms of demand, GCARD is a forum/ provides a platform: (i) to establish demand for research by a broad range of end users and their intermediaries; (ii) for CGIAR to clarify how demand for current research was set, determine how future priorities will be set, and present future priorities; and (iii) to assess gaps in the current research portfolio. Demand can be established either directly by people setting out what they think they will need, or indirectly through a range of foresight and analytical studies which set out constraints, challenges, and opportunities for agriculture. Given the long lag often apparent between research and widespread adoption of new technology, and the fact that research does not necessarily directly lead to technological innovation, the latter may often provide better direction for research and provide an opportunity to assess gaps in the current research portfolio.

2. Knowledge: In terms of knowledge, GCARD is a forum/ provides a platform: (i) to present the work and expected deliverables of current research programmes; (ii) to invite partners (GCARD participants) to share their findings in similar fields of research and development; (iii) to comment on and possibly join initiatives in specific countries or regions; and (iv) to offer to contribute and/or strengthen steps along the impact pathways. GCARD provides an opportunity for people to see what CGIAR is delivering, and to directly question researchers and programme directors. However, it is unreasonable for individual programmes to be held directly accountable through this process for two reasons. Firstly, it would be difficult to present research results in a way which an audience, largely unfamiliar with the programmes, could make an informed judgement on the success or otherwise of a programme. Furthermore, research is by its nature an uncertain venture, and high risk research may be what we are after. Secondly it risks undermining the primary means of programme accountability, through the Consortium performance management system and the results framework. Additionally, to avoid this being essentially a talking shop, CGIAR needs to think carefully how to capture feedback and establish a feedback loop, so it was more than a unidirectional process. An informational day could serve this knowledge purpose.

3. Forum for accountability. GCARD is a forum for accountability at level of the SRF aiming at: (i) agreeing on/ endorsing the process of establishing CGIAR system research targets and priorities; (ii) agreeing on ways/ means/ levels to measure progress; (iii) reporting quantitative and qualitative progress; (iv) sharing learning (content, process, institutional set-up, etc.); and (v) arriving at conclusions and decisions on implications for different parties engaged (i.e. CGIAR, NARS, IFAD, private sector, NGOs, Global For a, etc.). GCARD is a key forum at which to strengthen accountability by obtaining and responding to direct feedback. It's at the SRF level that CGIAR research targets are set and priorities established. The success of CGIAR is based on the extent to which results (the IDOs) established at a system level are being delivered. At this stage this is as much about agreeing on process and system level targets as assessing progress. Still, there must be an important element of accountability, where the Consortium presents the progress being made to deliver the overall SRF and the intermediate outcomes. Some of the questions the FC members were asking in Wageningen are relevant here regarding whether targets are set as an aggregate of national level targets or at the regional/global level.

(B) An effective GCARD meets the major functions above in (A). However there are additional considerations in arriving at an effective design for GCARD, such as:

1. GCARD should give a wide range of stakeholders a chance to assess the quality of the overall process being used by CGIAR to deliver the SRF. This does not mean requesting an endorsement of the process, as there are many vested interests around the table, but to set out a balanced, transparent, and comprehensive approach to its assessment.
2. The FCGC supports the conclusions of Rod Cooke's review that GCARD participants should represent users and intermediaries, rather than researchers. The purpose of the meeting is to get people round the table that can define demand, help set priorities, and endorse process.
3. GCARD's role should be distinguished between that of the Funders Forum, particularly if the role of GCARD is to endorse the SRF. The Funders Forum is a general assembly of the CGIAR donors (funders), whereas GCARD is mainly a conference of ARD stakeholders (doers of CGIAR, GFAR, and partners). The endorsement of the SRF by GCARD would be, at the high-level, a 'content' endorsement and possibly a 'shared roadmap', thus providing increased ownership by NARS and regional organizations.
4. The question of national, regional, and global demand is a challenge. The Cooke Report made the point that GCARD should be a forum for assessing demand, but how much should GCARD be a vehicle for disaggregating demand geographically (though there are actually other ways you could do this) is unclear. What countries should be the target and how responsive should it be to national demand?
5. The role of the private sector also needs clarification. Should the formal private sector have a role in setting demand (for example, Unilever, Syngenta, or Bayer)? This may be a contentious issue for some national representatives and FC members, but for others it would be essential. It would be hard to claim we polled demand without speaking to large and small businesses. Consideration needs to be given on whether the private sector should be engaged in a more focused forum, perhaps before GCARD.

6. CGIAR should be accountable for what it delivers; however, the FCGC believes that CGIAR needs to be realistic in setting boundaries. The Rod Cooke report says: “The GCARD partnership theme should focus to a greater extent than in GCARD 2 on research uptake pathways: partnership with the agricultural development community”. Fair enough, but he then argues that CGIAR should be accountable to national stakeholders; however, does that mean that CGIAR is held accountable for the regional and national uptake and use of research and other development processes? There is a real boundary issue here which needs to be explored. Accountability implies responsiveness, but how does CGIAR respond to this and all the other demands on it?
7. The FCGC recognises that GCARD provides an important opportunity for GFAR to undertake some of its own internal processes and that these are no doubt useful. However, the focus of GCARD is meeting the objectives of the CGIAR system as outlined in the Joint Agreement.

(C) Currently GCARD is a single global event. Consideration should be given to breaking it into smaller regional events, without a global gathering. This regionalization allows more focused and disciplined discussions which still meet the overall functions set out in Section (A) of this note.

(D) Once the functions and design are agreed upon, a cost assessment needs to be developed for the GCARD. However, it is clear from the Fund Council meetings that the new proposal must reflect a significantly smaller budget than used for the Uruguay event.

(E) In preparation for FC11, the FCGC asks its Chair to engage on its behalf with the Fund Office, GFAR, and the Consortium on these ideas. The next steps will be agreed upon at this joint discussion. A potential next step includes asking the Consortium to submit a brief concept note reflecting these ideas for review by the FCGC and consideration for discussion at FC11.